

# WHAT WOMEN ARE DOING FOR WOMEN

## A Plain, Practical Work Which Saves Women from Destitution

By Mrs. Russell Sage, Vice-President

**L**OOK upon the Woman's Exchange as one of the greatest institutions of this city. It has proved to be a blessing and the means of saving hundreds of women from starvation.

When a woman is ill to the point of death and has tried all known remedies prescribed by the best physicians in vain, and when hope of recovery has been abandoned, and her friends hearing of some physician hitherto unknown, send for him, and he cures the sick woman, she naturally looks upon that physician in the light of a savior.

Well, it is in just this light that the Woman's Exchange stands to the many women who, soul sick and weary of living in poverty, having looked in vain for means of support in other channels, have at last found a haven in that institution, where their immediate wants were not only supplied, but where they found promise of future maintenance.

I could cite dozens of cases which have come under my personal knowledge of women who would actually have starved or have committed suicide had it not been for the refuge offered by the Woman's Exchange. Many of them were women of culture, of refinement who were never brought up to work, who had no idea what it meant to battle with the world, and yet who on the death of father or husband suddenly found themselves penniless.

I will give you one instance: A woman whose husband was a successful business man and had retired on a large fortune, through some unwise investments lost a large share of his money.

Thinking to retrieve what he had lost, he went into Wall Street, and after a few weeks of wild speculation lost everything he possessed on earth. After this his health failed and he became almost good for nothing.

His wife owned a little place in Connecticut, and she persuaded him to go there with her and help her to raise chickens, which she thought she could sell to the New York dealers. But she found it cost more to feed and care for her chickens than she could get for them.

Some friends of hers who were interested in the Woman's Exchange asked her if she could not do some sort of fancy work and take it there to be sold. They offered to procure her the materials for any work she desired to do. One of the ladies bought her a membership in the Exchange. Not long after that the woman brought in a bowl of tempting looking chicken salad. It was bought at once, and from that day she sold no more chickens to the New York markets. She made salad of them all and readily sold at the Woman's Exchange all she could turn into salad. Now she is not able to supply the demand for her salad. It is all ordered before it is received at the Exchange.

This is only one instance. There are hundreds just as interesting: cases of women, young and old, who have found the means of support through the Exchange. These women never in the world could have gone out and found places in the ordinary lines of work.

You see, they are women who have been foolishly brought up. They never learned any trade or profession, and, oh! how thankful they are for a place like the Woman's Exchange, where they can take the results of their work and know that they will be remunerated for it.

Through the example and efforts of this parent Exchange other flourishing women's exchanges have been established in other cities.

Some in Europe have taken up the work on similar lines.

I make but one criticism on the Woman's Exchange, and that is that the prices charged for the things on sale there are much too high. It seems to me that if articles were sold as reasonably as they are in shops it would be better for all concerned.

First of all, double the amount would be sold. At the present rates only people of wealth can afford to buy things at the Exchange. This makes the buying of articles there seem like a charity, and some one has truly said, "Charity is dear."

My idea is that a woman's exchange should not be a charity in any way. It should be independent and self-supporting, giving value in goods for money received.

I do not know what methods are to be adopted in regard to the proposed new building. But it seems to me that it should be built on subscriptions from shareholders who are willing to invest a few thousand dollars each at a small per cent. I think men are more willing to help an enterprise that is carried out on business principles than one that seems purely a charity.

The Woman's Exchange of New York is a great institution, and its work is far reaching.

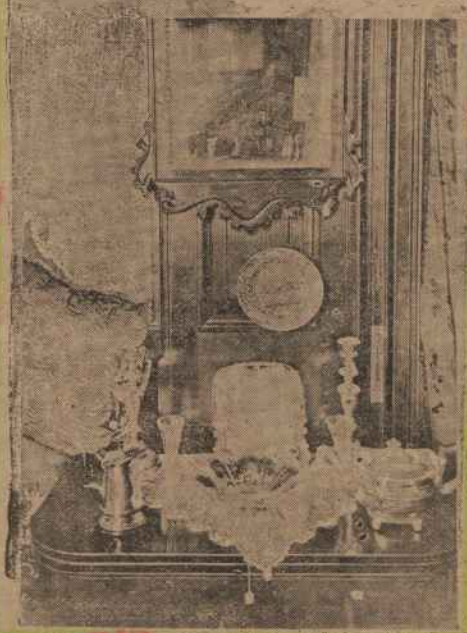
MRS. RUSSELL SAGE, Vice-President.



THE OLD HOME OF THE WOMAN'S EXCHANGE

A CORNER OF THE STATUETTE AND MEDALLION ROOM

SOME ODD BITS OF FURNITURE THAT WERE BURIED DURING THE REVOLUTION



A TABLE OF OLD LACE, ANCIENT SILVER MUGS AND MINIATURES